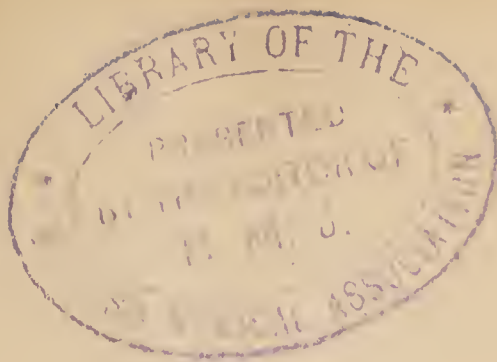


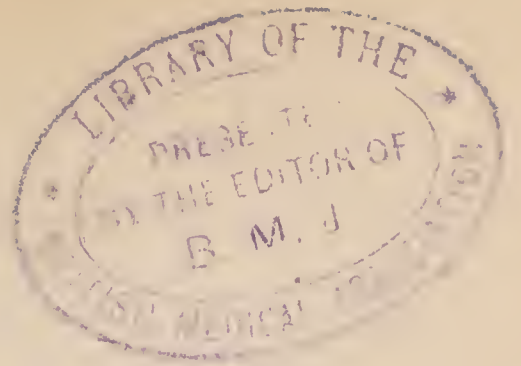
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THOUGHTS OF AN OCTOGENARIAN
ON OVERCROWDING



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THOUGHTS OF AN OCTOGENARIAN ON OVERCROWDING

By

His Honour JAMES MULLIGAN, K.C.

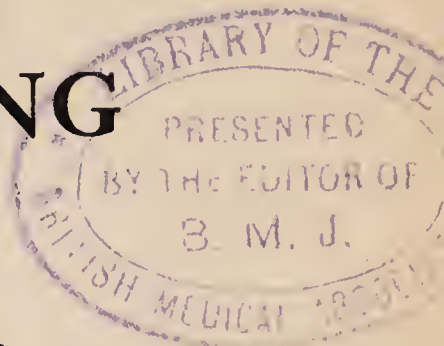
Author of

The Riddle of Justice and Justice in the After-Life

‘For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’—GAL. v. 14



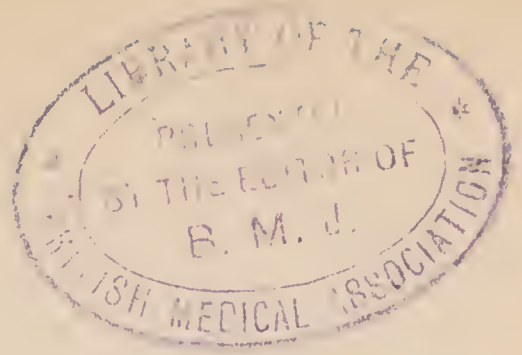
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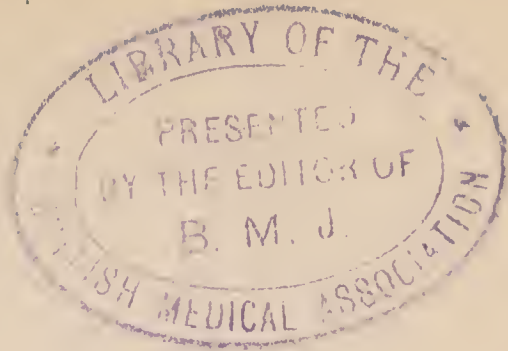
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Dedication

THESE THOUGHTS ARE DEDICATED
TO
THE HAPPY FLAPPERS OF 1929



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

I AM growing old ; most of the friends of my early days have passed into the unseen ; and

Whatever poet, orator, or sage
May say of it, old age is still old age.
It is the waning, not the crescent moon.

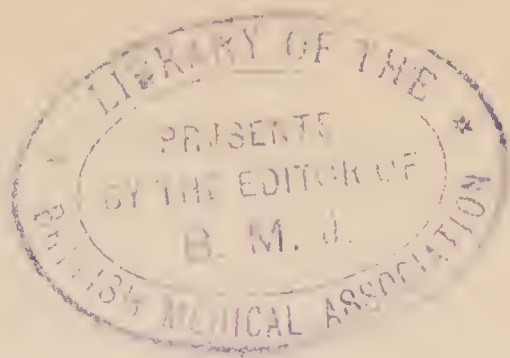
Many, in spite of their fourscore years, are able to engage in business and pleasure with almost pristine energy. I am not among them. But, although my strength has abated, love and hope keep my mind alert. What am I to do ? Sit idle through the evening of life ? By no means. I have my books and papers.

My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

They are the true Elysian fields in which an old man may linger, picking up grains of wisdom from writers ancient and modern. I do not aspire or hope to learn something additional each day. I simply let my mind roam at will through books and papers and jot down thoughts

that come to me from time to time. I do so without ill-will to any individual or body of individuals, and without any view to profit or gain. The act of writing itself gives me the occupation I need, and my scribble may perchance stimulate some reader or readers blessed with youth and vigour to take up arms against the appalling evils of overcrowding and to make an end of slums and slum-lordlings.

For personal convenience I am putting what I wish to say in the form of a dialogue. But at the outset I must state a few hard facts to form a sort of ground-work for discussion.



CHAPTER II

FACTS RELATING TO OVERCROWDING

THE Southwark Eleven : *The Times* of July 13th, 1928, has a paragraph in these words :

‘ When a summons under the Public Health Act was heard at Lambeth Police Court yesterday it transpired that a man, his wife, and nine children were living and sleeping in one room in Southwark.’

In *The Times* of the 26th of the same month the Bishop of Southwark gives some even more deplorable instances of overcrowding—more deplorable because of the weak health of the children. In one instance he says : ‘ Father, mother, and six children were living and sleeping in one room—two of the children were delicate, one suffering from nervous debility.’ In another instance : ‘ Father, mother, and five children were living and sleeping in one room—the boys aged 16 and 14 ; the girls aged 11, 8, and 5. The girl of 8 in delicate health.’

‘ In Hackney there are,’ said the Bishop of London, ‘ 24,859 people living more than two in a room ; 3,559 living more than three in a room ;

521 more than four in a room ; 110 more than five in a room ; 45 more than six in a room ; 17 more than seven in a room ; and 9 more than eight in a room.'

'Such a state of affairs,' said the Bishop, 'is too awful for words. I can see no cure for unemployment *in this country*. The cure is to send British stock to the Dominions and Colonies.'

In the distressed areas the state of affairs is (if possible) worse. Hunger is an added evil.

In the *Daily Mail* of September 27th, 1928, a case of another class is reported : An ex-soldier and his wife were charged at Stratford Police Court with exposing their baby daughter aged two to the risk of injury to her health. It appeared that the man and his wife, the latter with the baby in her arms, were found that morning at 1.45 asleep in a doorway at Ilford. The baby was well wrapped and nourished. They had been turned out of a room they rented because their landlord had been evicted by his superior landlord. The ex-soldier had paid his rent regularly.

Here is an instance of a case of yet another class, the aged unemployed. Recently I saw an old man resting on a seat near a public highway gazing at the stream of traffic. In answer to questions he said he had worked for a builder until he was seventy-two. He had a pension.

His complaint was that he had no work. 'There is no work for me,' is the sorrowful tale of many an old man and woman yearning for something to do. Pensions are great blessings, but they are not everything. It happens now and then that a rich man, liberated from the cares and toils of office, 'ploughs his lonely furrow' without a moan, but as a rule the aged labourer has no furrow and no plough, nor can he find content in books. Work in a garden of his own is what he needs and what he should have. Can he have it? We shall see.

CHAPTER III

A GRIM REPROACH

It is not necessary to ascertain what individuals or classes of individuals are responsible for the creation and development of slums and distressed areas. For the present purpose it is enough to say they exist, and that through them the sufferings and dangers, physical and moral, which encompass families like the Southwark Eleven are unspeakably harrowing. They are a grim reproach to this Christian kingdom.

Watchful (an inquisitive critic) : Where are the Christians ?

Senex (the writer) : There are numerous churches and chapels in Southwark and Hackney, and it is not far to the Great Hall of the Church House where the leaders of the Church of the nation are wont to assemble. There are also churches and chapels in the various distressed areas. In fact, we may assume that there are many professing Christians in the neighbourhood of all sufferers.

Watchful : What, then, are they all doing ? Are they proving themselves real neighbours to

the sufferers or do they leave them severely alone, as did the Priest and the Levite ?

Senex : Upon that I may refer to a recent statement by Dr. Temple, Archbishop of York.

Statement of Dr. Temple.

‘ There are, of course, palliative considerations to be urged. But I am convinced that, if all communicants loved their neighbours as themselves, the housing question would have been dealt with long ago. For if we love our neighbours as ourselves we would feel as much horror at their children having to be brought up in slums as at our own having to be brought up there, and we don’t.’

These solemn, restrained sentences of Dr. Temple are of extreme moment. They convey a just reproach to communicants, but the ground upon which that reproach is based touches every Christian of every persuasion, and every pious Hebrew who has a voice and vote in the election of Members of Parliament. I say every pious Hebrew, for the command ‘ Love thy neighbour as thyself ’ is written in the Pentateuch as well as in the Gospel. It is this weightier matter of the law which our Members of Parliament and our Ministers have left undone.

Theophilus (a friend) : What are the palliative

considerations alluded to by Dr. Temple? I ask because, unfortunately, I did not follow closely the trend of recent discussions.

Senex : I believe Dr. Temple was thinking only of the evils of the existing slum industry and of the hindrances to their removal. Why have they not been blotted out long ago? is his thought.

CHAPTER IV

WHY SLUMS ARE PERMITTED TO REMAIN

Senex : Slums have not been blotted out for two reasons. One is the prevalence of religious disputes. The other the apathy of Cabinet Ministers. As to the first, Dr. Temple indicates that slums have only been allowed to continue to darken our land because Christians have failed in their duty to love their neighbours as themselves. By palliative considerations he probably means excuses for leaving that duty undone.

Theophilus : What are the excuses ?

Watchful : That good men have been so distraught by storms of religious controversy that they have overlooked the duties which lie nearest to them.

You may have read that Melanchthon, wearied out with similar controversies, aptly described them as *rabies theologorum*. The disorder is catching, and its consequent apathy spreads among the various Churches and impedes remedial work.

CHAPTER V

CHURCH AND STATE

Theophilus : The consequences of the lamentable failure of duty mentioned by Dr. Temple are so fearful that the controversy which occasioned that failure should not be passed over in two words. What were the issues involved ?

Senex : The issues have been obscured by a Niagara of words ; but, stripped of verbiage, there are two main questions, one between Church and State, the other between Members of the Church Assembly *inter se*.

The quarrel between Church and State arose in this way. The Archbishops, an overwhelming majority of the Bishops and of members of the Church Assembly, were minded to revise the Book of Common Prayer, and for that purpose compiled a Prayer Book Measure, which, it is said, took twenty years in preparation. This Measure was presented to Parliament for its sanction. For the Measure it was contended that it represents the Catholic voice of the Church of England, that it has the sanction of the *co-operative* conscience of the Church, that Parliament

has no *moral* right to reject it, that in the spiritual realm the voice of the Church is the supreme authority. A minority of the Bishops and members of the Church Assembly opposed the Measure. It was therefore obvious that, if there be a co-operative Church conscience, it was divided on this occasion into parts and that the parts did not function harmoniously. Against the Measure it was said that the Church of England is the Church of the nation, in fact a part of the Constitution, and that Parliament is bound to see that no alteration is made in the service which might lead to discord among the people. The House of Commons rejected the Measure.

Theophilus : They could not in reason do otherwise. A co-operative conscience of the Church is to my mind incomprehensible. Surely, conscience is innate and individual, it does not admit either of addition or subtraction, either of synthesis or analysis. It is by itself alone the perfect witness of the law written in the heart. Is it right to tamper with the witness as a Church conscience co-operative supply association might do ?

Watchful : Not at all. The individual conscience needs no prompter.

Theophilus : Now what are the quarrels between the members of the Church Assembly *inter se* ?

Bo

CHAPTER VI

INTERNECINE CONTENTIONS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

Senex : These contentions relate to matters which are not essential—that is to say, not vital to those who profess and hold the Christian faith. Our Great Master, as you know, did not interpret to the striving Jews the symbolic mystery of the Bread of Life, and it did not seem good to Him to interpret even to His disciples the Holy Mystery of the Supper. He left it to each true believer to interpret this sacred observance for himself or for herself. It is concerning the spiritual meaning of this Mystery that the members were quarrelling *inter se*.

Watchful : The quarrels (which it is said have produced chaos in the Church) rage around this matter in the main. But in the heat of argument a fierce battle took place about the construction of an aumbry in the church to reserve the elements for the sick. Apart from this, the conflict over the Prayer Book Measure has little to distinguish it from the controversy satirised by Dean Swift two hundred years ago.

If the Dean's analogies and allegories had been as well known as they should have been, the disastrous battles over the New Prayer Book Measure would never have taken place.

Theophilus : If these controversies have as is said retarded the abolition of slums to a great extent, it may be well to accentuate anything calculated to prevent their recurrence.

CHAPTER VII

RABIES THEOLOGORUM

Watchful : The Prayer Book controversy may be likened, *mutatis mutandis*, to the war which was raging in Lilliput when Lemuel Gulliver landed there. Dean Swift describes it as follows : ‘ The Kingdom of Lilliput had then been engaged in a most obstinate civil war for six and thirty moons past. It began upon the following occasion : It is allowed on all hands that the primitive way of breaking eggs before we eat them was upon the larger end ; but his present Majesty’s grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his fingers, whereupon the King his father published an edict commanding all his subjects upon great penalties to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law that there have been six rebellions raised on that account, wherein one King lost his life and another his crown. It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death through this quarrel. In spite of these disastrous experiences

the Big-endians and the Little-endians were preparing to renew the conflict when Gulliver sailed from Lilliput.' In like manner all parties here are preparing to renew the quarrel between Church and State, and the intestine quarrels within the Church itself.

Now if you substitute the vote of the House of Commons for the edict of the King of Lilliput, the aumbry with its contents for the egg, Anglo-Catholics for Big-endians, and Evangelicals for Little-endians, Dean Swift's allegory will give you an adequate idea of the quarrel over the Prayer Book Measure.

Theophilus : The controversy seems to have been mischievous in the extreme. It has been a palliation only in the sense that it has thrown a cloak over distress and kept it out of view. *Tempestate disputationis serenitas caritatis obnubilatur* is an old saying and true. The path to help the needy has been clouded over, but every cloud across the sun passes at the last, and this cloud will assuredly be swept away. Then a new spirit will arise to restore life and health to the Church and to the people.

Senex : We may all learn one lesson from the Prayer Book controversy, mischievous as it has been. The lesson is to avoid quarrels on questions which are not vital, for we know from history that no quarrels are so endless or so

harmful as those which arise out of opinions about unessential matters. They fly to the heads of disputants and work like madness on the brain.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAY OUT

GOOD-DOING—‘BIENFAISANCE’

Theophilus : Having regard to the baneful influence upon the distressed of ecclesiastical disputes on unessentials, it may be wise to turn our thoughts to what the words of Dr. Temple suggest, i.e. good-doing. The Abbe de Saint Pierre called it *bienfaisance*. ‘*Bienfaisance*,’ said he, ‘is the spirit of true religion and a principal aim of the Gospel—that is to say, the practice of the command : Love thy neighbour as thyself.’

Watchful : Do you mean that *bienfaisance* is a substitute for faith ?

Theophilus : No, no. It is the outward sign of faith in the heart. It is the path to Christian Unity.

Watchful : The change you mean is to drop disputation and take to acts of kindness.

Theophilus : Precisely. We must plead for that work to be carried out which, as Dr. Temple has intimated, has been left undone—in other words, strive to abolish slums and provide houses in their stead.

Money-More (a costive Conservative) : That is a big order. It can never be carried through.

Senex : The task is full of difficulties, but they are not insurmountable if we love our neighbours as ourselves.

Jesse Collings set out on the right path. If his vision of 'three acres and a cow' had been given a fair trial, the unspeakable horrors of overcrowding which exist to-day would have been ended or lessened. Good old Jesse loved home, neighbours, and fatherland. Now it is upon a threefold affection such as he had that we must depend for the *permanent* relief of the distressed and for the future welfare of the kingdom.

Disaffection is a great danger. But, when we think of it, what love for country or for King should we expect from the Southwark Eleven, or from thousands of workless men in the like plight? Is it any wonder that some among them, in despair, barter their allegiance for Russian gold? The true remedy seems to be to enable each working family to obtain an interest in the land—to take root in the soil.

Watchful : Yes, but their tenure must be permanent. 'Give,' said Arthur Young, 'a man the *secure* possession of a bleak rock and he will turn it into a garden ; give him a nine years lease of a garden and he will turn it into a desert. The magic of property turns sand into gold.'

Senex : That suggests the true solution of three hard problems : housing, unemployment, and disaffection. These all hang together. My notion is this : a detached cottage with half an acre or more of garden should be provided for each working family of good repute. The family should be let into possession on agreeing to pay a fair price for the freehold by instalments. Villages consisting of such freehold cottages should be established within say twenty miles of factories, mines, fishing, and all other centres of productive labour. These freehold cottages would be a cure, a radical cure. The palliative measures begun by the Minister of Health and emigration schemes will alleviate the hardships of some for a time, but only for a time. Blocks of houses would soon become slums.

Theophilus : Laying out gardens, making roads and canals, supplying water, gas and electricity, and building materials might be begun at once, and would give employment to many who are able and willing to work.

Money-More : Where is the land for this grand Utopian scheme ?

Senex : The scheme is meant to be a cure, not a mere temporary palliative. Hence it is big, but it is not grand, and it is not Utopian ; it is practical. To live a few miles from your work is no hardship now that the facilities for travel are so

plentiful. If you go to Wolverton Works, to take one example, and enquire, you will find that many of the workers there have, with the aid of Building Societies, bought old cottages ten to twenty miles from Wolverton, put them in order, and now occupy them as owners. They are not Utopian mansions, they are little things, but they are their own, in which they and their families enjoy health and comfort. The lodging-house warning, 'children not admitted,' does not trouble them. As for land for cottages, are there not in the British Isles millions of acres of cultivable ground which have never brightened a coulter or blunted a sickle? Let the big owners cultivate the more remote tracts—remote from centres of labour so that working families may be provided for.

Money-More : But these acres have owners. Where is the money to come from to buy them?

Watchful : Before dealing with the money problem, is the proposed scheme advisable?

Theophilus : It certainly seems so. It would blot out the dark reproach of the slums. The building of cottages would give work to many unemployed. Ancillary operation for roads, aqueducts, drains, etc., would give more work. *The individual ownership of a cottage would be a bond of patriotism and a barrier against Communism.* The cottage owners would increase the productivity of their gardens one hundredfold.

Money-More : Not without the aid of machinery?

Theophilus : Yes, by manual labour. You do not need a reaping machine or a steam plough for a vegetable plot. The increased produce of each plot would not only benefit the owner, but the State. It has been said, and truly said, that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together.

But to return : By far the greatest advantage from this plan is that it will supply the *central lamp* to education throughout the land.

Money-More : Your village schools would fall far short of the present schools, built as they are at great cost and fitted with every aid to learning.

Theophilus : I agree our schools are fully equipped for one side of education, for imparting a knowledge of books and games. But there is the other and more important side, the formation of character. Now it is upon the character of the rising generation that the future of the nation depends. Hence the extreme importance of forming their characters in the right, the Christian way of living. To this end parents must have a house, a home, in which they can begin such education. How could either parents or teachers

mould aright the character of children housed like the Southwark Eleven? The growth of character must begin in the home. Give the little ones a chance. The proposed scheme is meant to do that. The existing schools, with their equipment, will always be needed for those children who have homes that are not overcrowded.

Senex : There is another advantage of this plan which should not be forgotten. Aged men and women after long years of toil would find in their little homes a quiet retreat in the evening of their days, and their gardens would give them occupation.

Theophilus : I like the scheme ; its advantages are many and great : But Money-More says, and some may think with him, that it will fail for want of funds.

Watchful : Have no fear. This generous people who blotted out slavery will not fail to abolish slummery and cleanse the land from slums and from the horrible system of slum-lordism.

Our reproach, slums, must be taken away.

As for funds, there are vast reserves of wealth in the country, enough, and more than enough, to carry out the proposed cottage plan and to employ all who are willing to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage.

CHAPTER IX

FINANCE

Theophilus : In our view it is clear that slums must be totally abolished and the slum industry annihilated. The great question is in what way and from whom are the necessary funds to be obtained ?

Senex : I think the example of super-tax may assist us. After the war interest on the vast sums borrowed and expended on protecting and preserving life and property, could not be met by ordinary taxation, so our rulers wisely resolved to raise what was then needed by means of a super-tax on the incomes of the wealthy and well-to-do. It was just and right, as their fortunes and positions had been salved and safeguarded by our Navy and Army and Air Force. Another crisis has arisen, in relation to the salvage of men, women and children at home, and it seems to me that it would be wise and prudent to provide funds for this emergency in a similar way ; i.e. by an additional tax. My notion is that this new tax, which might be termed an emergency tax, should be imposed by Parliament *until* the land

is totally freed from slums and slum-lordlings.

Theophilus : How to raise the necessary funds is a question of grave national importance. How ought a Government chosen by the people, from the people—from such as love their country, love justice, love their neighbours, and hate unfair gain—solve that great and urgent problem?

Senex : To solve it the borrowing of hundreds of millions must be avoided and we should not expropriate capital.

Money-More : The country would not have a capital levy on any account.

Senex : It is not necessary : according to recent official returns, there were at the beginning of 1927 five hundred and sixty-two millionaires in this country who had an *income* of more than £99,000 a year on the average, and there are thousands upon thousands whose incomes exceed £1,500 a year each. Now the existence of all those incomes, if you think the matter out, is due to the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force. If it had not been for their courage and strength in repelling the Germans and safeguarding this country there would be no opportunity of making an income, and no income of £99,000 a year for any British magnate, and no opportunity of making an income of £1,500 a year for a British citizen. Those incomes are indirectly fruits of

operations in the war in the nature of salvage—operations upon which our Government spent immense sums of money. It seems only fair that those who are reaping most benefit from those operations should, when called upon, recoup to the State in its hour of need portions of that expenditure in just measure out of, and according to, the amounts of their incomes. That was the view taken when the super-tax was imposed. At present the amount of suffering is appalling, and to cure it it seems just and proper to follow the course taken in imposing the super-tax. The men who would have lost most if the Germans had not been kept back from ravaging our country should pay most. Hence the incidence of the emergency tax should be as follows. Let each super-tax payer pay by way of emergency tax a sum equal in amount to two-thirds of his present super-tax, and let each income-tax payer who is not a super-tax payer, but whose income exceeds £1,500 a year, pay the emergency tax at the rate of one penny in the pound on the excess over £1,500 up to £1,600, and an additional penny in the pound on each additional £100 or part of £100 until the income exceeds £1,900 and is less than £2,000.

Money-More : Such a tax is not needed.

Senex : The imposition of some such emergency tax is a stern necessity. The health and

safety of the people demand it, and I believe all good citizens will support it if they will give the matter fair and honest consideration. Let an income-tax payer put himself and his family in the place of the Southwark Eleven. If he and his wife and children had all to live and sleep in one reeking room amid unholy surroundings, what would happen to them? Would he feel confident that his daughters would grow up modest, and his sons upright? If super-tax-payers would only think of their obligations to the State for preserving not only their lives and the lives of their wives and children, but also for safeguarding their opportunities for earning incomes, they would, as *men of honour*, pay this proposed emergency tax, and pay it cheerfully.

Money-More : Not cheerfully. Taxation, even when just, is vexatious, and I am not satisfied that an emergency tax is needed. The intention of the de-rating measure is to alleviate the troubles of the homeless and the workless.

Watchful : Whatever the intention may be, their troubles remain. It is the old story of the rich miser who put green spectacles on his horse and fed him on shavings. For four years our Government has made gestures of helping the distressed by giving them a handful or two of shavings scraped together from one public

service or another. That won't do ; you cannot cleanse the land with shavings, the duty, the obligation, is sacred ; let it like a debt of honour be paid in full by the State.

Theophilus : There is one point, Senex, about this scheme which rather puzzles me. What assurance have we that the emergency tax, if imposed, will be used only for the abolition of slums, and for housing, and aiding the unemployed ?

Senex : In this matter waste-thrift must be avoided. We must take care not, as it were, to pour radium into rat-holes. To avoid waste-thrift the emergency tax should be paid to a special account to be used by Local Authorities, with the consent of the Minister of Health, for the abolition of slums, for the provision of freehold cottages for workers, for succouring the distressed, and for no other use or purpose whatsoever.

Money-More : I cannot help thinking that this tax, in spite of its plausibility, would cripple industry.

Watchful : Industry is an equivocal term. Sometimes it is applied to the activities of those who aim at producing commodities for the welfare of man. Sometimes it is applied to the activities of men who spend their lives in doing unessential or harmful things. Agriculture is an example of the former, share-pushing of the latter.

Money-More : The share-pusher has a house
Co

and family to keep as well as the farmer, 'and he who does not provide for his own house is' (we are taught) 'worse than an infidel.'

Watchful : 'And I think,' said Dean Swift, 'that he who provides only for his own house is just equal with an infidel.'

Theophilus : The vast sums contributed for the mitigation or palliation of distress prove that the bulk of the British people are not just equal with infidels. They do much more than provide for their *own* houses. The generous spirit that led our fathers to abolish slavery is not dead. It will compel British rulers to abolish slums and open up avenues of employment for willing workers. May we not now affirm that the proposed scheme is desirable ?

Money-More : Not quite. Would not the emergency tax in the long run be deducted either from capital or from the wages of the workmen ?

Senex : Certainly not. The man with £99,000 a year income would deduct it from his superfluities ; others from their luxuries. Not one of them need and not one of them, if he is a good citizen, would on account of an emergency tax deduct one farthing of income from productive industry or from wages. After payment of all taxes the men with incomes of £99,000 would have over £30,000 each, and the lot of other emergency-tax payers would be enviable

compared with the lot of the ordinary clergyman, or physician, or lawyer, or school-teacher, or typist, or journalist, or farmer, or shopkeeper, or skilled or unskilled workman.

Money-More : To attempt to impose this new tax would lose the Government thousands of votes.

Senex : It might. But what is the grim alternative? To leave thousands of the people in our midst to perish or undergo living death in slums and distressed areas. Should a good Government sacrifice its subjects for lucre? Our Cabinet Ministers can, if they will, save a multitude of the distressed from misery and moral death. If they will not, has not each of them a weighty responsibility?

CHAPTER X

WISDOM OF THE ELECTORS

Theophilus : I think we may now affirm that in the interests of the nation it is most desirable that an Act of Parliament be passed for the total abolition of slums ; for the creation of freehold cottages in their stead ; and for defraying the cost by imposing an emergency tax as already described. These reforms have been delayed partly by religious dissensions and partly by the apathy of our Ministers. An election is near. Let the electors decide whether overcrowding, with its inherent evils and appalling sufferings, is or is not to be continued. The question is one which should be removed far from religious controversy and far from political bias. Like the Great War, in one respect this is a fight for the succour and protection of men, women, and children. In that war the brave English soldier, and the equally brave Scottish and Irish and Welsh soldiers, did not halt to discuss unessential forms and ceremonies, but marched forward side by side to repel the aggressors.

In this crisis of human suffering, if all who

profess to 'love their neighbours as themselves' will be true to their professions the result cannot be doubtful. The judgment of the electors will be righteous, 'Slums must be wholly abolished.'

Watchful : Who is to lead a campaign on behalf of our distressed neighbours? Our Cabinet Ministers have, so to speak, hitched their wagon to the wealthy and well-to-do, and are not likely to lead. Neither Safeguarding Industry nor De-rating will guard the distressed from moral destruction. Neither will feed the hungry. Neither will clothe the naked.

Money-More : For that matter, neither will the *Free Trade* voting plan, nor *The Labour Nationalisation of Banks*, or other inanimate entities.

Watchful : That is so ; but the greater responsibility rests upon the Government. If our Ministers had been half as zealous for the welfare of the distressed as they have been for that of the wealthy and well-to-do, there would be no unsolved housing question and no unsolved unemployment problem to-day.

Theophilus : I feel no difficulty about a leader. 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' Surely this people will demand that the much-suffering people within our gates shall be enabled to obtain healthy homes and a living wage. I cannot believe that a leader in such a meritorious cause will be wanting.

CHAPTER XI

A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Senex : What may happen at the coming election I know not ; but I feel bound to say this : For more than fifty years I have voted for Conservative after Conservative. I am now in my eighty-second year. If I live and am able to go to the poll in May, my vote (although it is but the cipher of a cipher) will not be given to anyone who does not undertake in plain words to support a measure for the total abolition of slums ; for the provision in their stead of freehold cottages for workers ; and for the imposition of an emergency tax on the incomes of the wealthy and well-to-do to defray the expenses.

The recent visit of the Prince to distressed miners has brought to the forefront the momentous questions of housing and unemployment and it may well happen that our Cabinet Ministers will reconsider their personal responsibility, will hearken to the cry of the children at the eleventh hour, and will grapple with the primal duty which they have hitherto left undone. If so, great good may come of it.

There are grounds for hoping that after the

coming election a spirit of good-doing will prevail. The recent extension of the franchise goes to strengthen that hope.

According to natural justice, as taught by Pythagoras, equal opportunities should be given to men and women to better their own conditions in life as well as to contribute to the welfare of the State. It has taken five and twenty centuries for that simple truth to penetrate the male cranium. At last it has won through, owing to the courage of the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary.

The sympathies of the new voters will without doubt be with the sufferers in slums and distressed areas. They will not turn deaf ears to the cry of the children. Their adversaries already fear their kindly influence, and in order to belittle it call them 'Flappers.'

So, in years gone by, one political party was nicknamed 'Tory,' the other 'Whig,' by way of derision. Tory and Whig came to be honoured names, and I venture to say 'Flapper' will come to be more highly honoured than either. But of that in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII

THE OFFICE OF THE FLAPPER

Senex : Happy, happy flappers. At last the tide of blessing flows in upon you. Your powers are great, your prospects are brilliant. You should fix your aspirations high. Your namesakes, the agile young wild ducks of the fens, when their wings have grown and clothed them with beauty, fly up and away to enjoy higher, purer air. You have now got your wings, your votes, and on them you may soar up and up until you occupy half the offices of State, half the seats of the mighty ; only half, for equality is equity.

I may remind you, Florimel (*a leading flapper*), that you and the great contingent of flappers are all entering upon a meritorious war. Your first battle, your fire-baptism, is to take place a few weeks hence. Let your motto be ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ Fight for the total abolition of slums and for the provision of cottage freeholds in their stead, and you will in truth be fighting *pro aris et focis*, for hearth and home, and motherland. The men who represent the people

in Parliament have shirked this urgent task. Your sympathies with the distressed are deeper and more constant than theirs. You can and will succour the sufferers ; your courage and patience will not fail them. That your first battle is for the weak is a good omen. The memory of it will help you later on to right your own wrongs and fight your own battles if troubles should come to you. You may remember reading in *The Heart of Midlothian* what Jeanie Deans said to Queen Caroline. ‘ When the hour of trouble comes to the mind or to the body, then it isna what we hae dune for oursells, but what we hae dune for others, that we think on maist pleasantly.’

Florimel : I like the scheme and am eager for the fight. I feel sure all my friends will fight with me ; but how should we set to work ?

Senex : Delicately draw the attention of electors at every opportunity to the hardships and sufferings and moral dangers which beset children in slums and distressed areas. Lead men who are busy in their offices and comfortable in their own homes to *think* of the miseries of their neighbours. That is the first and perhaps most important step ; ‘ more evil is wrought by *want of thought* than ever is by *want of heart*.’ Your next step is to follow the advice which Raleigh gave to Queen Elizabeth : ‘ Win men’s hearts,’ said

he, ‘ and you win their hands and their purses ’ ; you may add, *and their votes*. You will find Raleigh’s advice worth more than all the political speeches and political manœuvres in which party wire-pullers trade.

Florimel : It is not necessary, then, for us to listen to itinerant lecturers speaking either from costers’ barrows or from touring cars ?

Watchful : Certainly not. Your purpose is to obtain and support a Government of good-doers—a Government that will not *delay* to anyone justice seasoned with mercy—a Government zealous for the welfare of all the people. For that purpose you have nothing to learn from party-political experts. Each party has an abundant supply of flapdoodle for its followers. None of them has a sufficient supply of human kindness. That you must contribute.

Your adversaries are now taunting you with your inexperience in the dark games of politics.

Florimel : Are taunts in season ? I thought the season was over.

Watchful : It is not, and you may find it useful by way of silencing your adversaries to ask them were they themselves not born of women—of flappers ? Is it not owing to the care and teaching of those flappers that they are able to vote to-day ? Are they too dull to understand that the continuance of this kingdom depends upon

flappers, that if they do not consent to marry and people it, it cannot, great as it is, endure beyond one generation? Your critics have much to learn of and from you.

Your office is one of great importance. The flappers in Laputa were, as you know, both guards and guides. They used flaps or little flails to agitate men immersed in trade or speculation, or absorbed in philosophy, or bemused in religious controversy; to guard them against dangers to themselves, to awake in them a sense of what they owed to their friends, to their neighbours, and to the State, and to guide them safely through life. Their duties have been transmitted to the flappers of 1929.

And now, Florimel, it is the office of you and your friends, gently, as it were, with the flap of an angel's wing, to awaken the too eager money-makers, and waft them on to serve in this crusade for succouring their suffering neighbours and for taking away from this Christian land the reproach of slum and slum-industry.

Florimel : If there is a candidate who will undertake to support the scheme we shall, of course, do our very best to return that candidate. But if there is no such candidate, what ought we to do?

Theophilus : You must try, in that case, to find a candidate of your own. Remember you hold

the balance of power, and be careful so to use your votes that that balance shall not be taken out of your hands.

Florimel : In case there is no suitable man candidate, my friends and I might wish to put forward as candidate an active flapper, but I feel there would be difficulty in finding one who would be acceptable to us and to working-men voters.

Theophilus : There might be some difficulty, but I think an ancient parable may help you to solve it. You have read how Queen Sheba came to Jerusalem to *prove* King Solomon with *hard questions*. One of her interviews, as narrated by a Rabbin to Isaac D'Israeli, is described by the latter in these words : 'The power of King Solomon had spread his wisdom to the remotest parts of the known world. Queen Sheba, attracted by the splendour of his reputation, visited this poetical King at his own court ; there one day, to exercise the sagacity of the monarch, Sheba presented herself at the foot of his throne ; in each hand she held a wreath, the one was composed of natural, the other of artificial flowers. Art, in the labour of the mimetic work, had exquisitely emulated the lovely tones of nature so that, at the distance it was held by the Queen for the inspection of the King, it was deemed impossible for him to decide, as her

“hard” question imputed, which wreath was the production of nature and which the work of art. The sagacious Solomon seemed perplexed, yet to be vanquished, though in a trifle by a trifling woman, irritated his pride. The son of David, he who had written treatises on the vegetable world “from the cedar to the hyssop,” to acknowledge himself outwitted by a woman with shreds of paper and glazed painting! The honour of the monarch’s reputation for divine sagacity seemed diminished, and the whole Jewish court looked solemn and melancholy. At length an expedient presented itself to the King, and one, it must be confessed, worthy of the naturalist. Observing a cluster of bees hovering about a window, he commanded that it should be opened: it was opened, the bees rushed into the Court and alighted immediately on one of the wreaths, while not a single one fixed on the other. The baffled Sheba had one more reason to be astonished at the wisdom of Solomon.’

We may all learn from this that the working bees, *the good citizens*, are attracted by natural beauties, by the flowers of the field, and not by painted blooms. In *Henry V.* Shakespeare describes with master hand how the honey-bees by *a rule of nature* teach a peopled kingdom the fine art of government.

Follow the rule of nature and select your candidate for good qualities which are implanted by God, and not for superficial charms borrowed from a beauty parlour, and you will do well.

Watchful : When your first great battle has been fought and won you at once enter upon another campaign—a campaign for which, according to all tradition, you are specially fitted.

Florimel : What is that ?

Watchful : Party politicians call it finance, but in their hands ‘fiddlesticks’ would be a more appropriate name. It is the art of household management on an enlarged scale. Mere men bungle that art when they attempt it in the family circle, and Ministers have not been more successful in managing the great household of the State. The results have been wastefulness, extravagance, and confusion. It remains for you flappers to put things straight by introducing true economies and provident supervision. With your natural aptitudes and keener insight you can soon make beneficial changes.

Senex : Not soon, Florimel ; you will have a hard struggle with those who have vested interests. But toil on hopefully. To keep up your spirits cast your vision forward, imagine some possible good results from your first battle ; cottages in villages dotted here and there throughout the country ; healthy children, redeemed

from slums and distressed areas, well-clad and well fed, romping on village greens ; young men and young women returning home from their day's work in shop or factory or mine to trim and keep and plant their own little plots of land ; old men and women looking at their poultry or sauntering in their gardens, soothed by the song of the birds and refreshed by the smell of growing flowers. All, all in their quiet homes shielded from those hardships which are inseparable from slums. All, all, cheerful and content, for, as an old mystery play puts it,

Life is fullest of content
When delight is innocent.

You, Florimel, and the great army of flappers may find comfort in your trials from such thoughts. Such thoughts may even inspire you all to noble deeds as her *voices*, according to tradition, inspired the Maid of Orleans. Your war against vested interests and mere money-makers will be arduous. However, your courage will not fail, you will keep the upward way, the way of good-doing, your way to High Office. We know that your patriotism is ardent and enduring, and that you will never hunger for or side-track to the flesh-pots of the City. Fight on ; if the ascent is difficult, victory is certain and

the prizes are great. Fight on, and in years to come thousands upon thousands of working families in their own healthy cottage homes will bless the graceful, warm-hearted Flappers of 1929.



